



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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Baucus Requests Details on Interior Department Planned Land Rights Purchase

Senator Concerned by "Charitable Tax Deduction" Potential

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus today sent a letter to the Inspector General of the U.S. Interior Department requesting further details regarding the department's planned acquisition of mineral rights located in the Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

Baucus highlighted his concerns to the Inspector General about land donations and potentially abusive charitable tax deductions received from the donations.

Full text of the letter follows:

December 16, 2003

Mr. Earl Devany
Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Devany:

Recent press accounts indicate that the Department of Interior Inspector General office has initiated an investigation into the Department of the Interior's planned acquisition of mineral rights located in the Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge. The press accounts have also indicated that the entity selling the above mentioned mineral rights to the federal government also plans to take a partial sale charitable deduction as part of the transaction.

As you may know, the Finance Committee is investigating activities of various tax exempt organizations, with specific attention being paid to potentially abusive tax transactions involving donations of land. Because of our concern over land donations, and charitable tax deductions in general, we are interested in viewing your findings. Accordingly, I am requesting

that you provide a copy of the draft reports on these projects to my staff as soon as they are available.

Sincerely yours,

Max Baucus
Ranking Member